



Photos by Airman 1st Class Stephen Collier

Staff Sgt. Brent Burnett, 49th AMXS, with the help of Airman 1st Class Miguel Davila, precisely position a Guided Bomb Unit 12 into the F-117's bomb rack.

Weapons loaders hone wartime skills in new competition

by **Airman 1st Class Stephen Collier**
49th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The 49th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron's weapons loaders are honing their skills a little differently these days.

The 9th Aircraft Maintenance Unit deployed June 25 to Kunsan Air Base, South Korea. The remaining weapons loaders from the 9th were combined with the 8th.

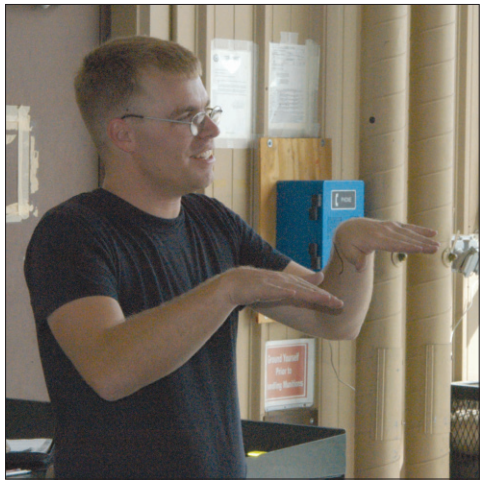
The 49th Maintenance Group weapons standardization personnel, along with the 49th AMXS, have held a new weapons combat turn competition. The competition has allowed weapons loaders to perform their Air Force mission in a scenario similar to an exercise or combat situation.

The new load competition is in addition to the existing monthly and quarterly competitions already scheduled.

Chief Master Sgt. Michael Tompkins, 49th MXG wing weapons manager, explained the weapons combat turn competition was not developed to replace the weapons load crew of the quarter competition, but to provide practice to the load crews while part of their team is deployed.

Chief Tompkins said the flight line combat turn competition allows load crews to practice their skills.

"This competition was designed to give load crews at Holloman more practice as



Staff Sgt. Brent Burnett describes to competition evaluators how his weapons crew inserted a weapon.

well as enhance their overall job knowledge," Chief Tompkins said. "The more practice the load crews are afforded, the better prepared they are for an exercise or combat situation."

Staff Sgt. Ian Snowsill, 49th MXG loading standardization crew member and one of the NCOs behind the development of the loading event, said the competition allows loaders the chance to become more comfortable while performing their mission.

"When these loaders deploy, they'll be familiar with loading in a stressful environment," Sergeant Snowsill said. "Even though this is additional training, we have made the competition into a friendly event within the weapons community to foster esprit de corp as well as loading skills. There's more team spirit when you're on the flight line competing together at the same time."

The weapons combat turn is conducted on the flight line simultaneously at two different locations. Weapons Standardization evaluators observe the loaders performing a complete munitions up-load at each location as one expects to see in an exercise or real-world contingency.

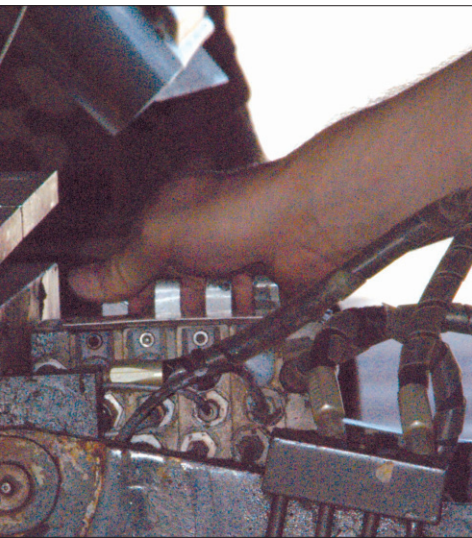
Once the weapons are prepped and loaded, both crews perform their post-load operations and are graded by evaluators. Soon after, the winner is named.

Staff Sgt. Anthony Horn, 49th MXG weapons academic instructor, said this type of competition would have better prepared him and others before their deployment supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"When you're training, everything is set up for you," Sergeant Horn said. "In the desert, there can be other obstacles including the jet noise from other airframes on the taxiway and possible sand storms. From prepping the jet to when it takes off, this will definitely help load crews learn to incorporate themselves into the entire process of an aircraft coming back from a mission."

Sergeant Horn added that in a combat situation, a jet without munitions is useless.

"For crews that spend all night on a mid shift loading bombs," he said, "they find a



Tech. Sgt. Douglas Monaghan uses the bomb lift table on a weapons loading jammer to position a Guided Bomb Unit 10 into the bomb rack. The jammer is a small vehicle that loads and moves munitions into place.



Airman 1st Class Brian Zeh, 49th AMXS, moves a dash-60 electrical plug into place. The aircraft ground equipment provides the stealth with electrical power so crews can turn off the aircraft's engines.

sense of satisfaction knowing their aircraft successfully dropped its weapons on a target."

The 49th MXG plans to resume the weapons load crew of the quarter competition later this fall when all crews have returned.



Tech. Sgt. Douglas Monaghan and Airman 1st Class Herbert Green, 49th AMXS, position a Guided Bomb Unit 10 into place before loading.



Airman 1st Class Brian Zeh, 49th AMXS, looks over a firing pin on a Guided Bomb Unit 12. As a load crew goes through its technical orders, members constantly inspect to ensure the weapon will be deliverable.